

# Basic Guidelines for Showmanship

## Some basics before entering the show ring:

- **The Lead (leash):** Do not use the same leash and collar for showmanship that you use for obedience or agility. We have some showmanship leads for sale if you do not have one. Ask a knowledgeable person how to position the showmanship lead on the dog and in your hand.
- **Clothing:** Refer to the Indiana 4-H Dog Showmanship Guide (4-H-716-W) on the appropriate attire (clothes), etc., to wear for the show. In general though, wear something that makes your dog stand out; do not wear black if you have a black dog, but do not wear something that makes you stick out (like a neon yellow outfit). Look conservative (appropriate) and nice. If you have a black dog, khaki pants or a pastel dress would work fine. Do not wear open-toed shoes, sandals, or slip-on shoes. Make sure your shoes have a back to them, because you will be trotting around the ring. If you do not have a Showmanship Guide, ask for one at a meeting or they are available on-line at: [www.ces.purdue.edu/extmedia/4H/4-H-716-W.pdf](http://www.ces.purdue.edu/extmedia/4H/4-H-716-W.pdf)
- **Patterns:** Refer to the Showmanship Guide with the patterns that you should know for the show. They are explained very well. There are many things in the Showmanship Guide that are important, so PLEASE read it. You do not have to memorize it, but the L-pattern, the Triangle Pattern, and the Courtesy Turn are 3 things you SHOULD memorize how to do.
- **Bait:** You can use bait (food or toy) in the ring if you want to, but you should ask a Dog Club Leader or one of the older kids how to use it properly. Do not worry about using bait, it is not required that you use it.
- **Stacking:** Some breeds have ways that they are customarily presented. Check with a knowledgeable person, or on-line. One resource is: <http://cru.cahe.wsu.edu/CEPublications/em4904/em4904.pdf>

## What to do when it is your turn to go into the ring:

There are 4 basic movements in showing conformation or in showmanship: the first gait (go-around) around the ring with your group, the individual examination of each dog, the individual pattern for each dog, and then the last gait around the ring (go-around) with your group. Sometimes the judge will have you do more than those 4 things. When you are a beginner, they don't usually do a lot more than that, so do not worry. If they do, the judge will tell you what to do, and if you are confused, just ask the judge and they will be more than happy to tell you what to do.

When it is your turn to show, the ring steward (the judge's helper) will line up everyone in your class according to whose dog gaits (trots) the fastest. Generally, this is from the biggest dog to the smallest. When it is time to go into the ring, the judge will tell you to come in and go around the ring in a circle all together, and stop to stack (set-up) your dog where she/he tells you (close to where you started your circle). If you are the first person in line, it is really important to listen to where the judge tells you to go, because you are leading the group.

Once you do your go-around, you will start to stack your dog. Everyone should be in a single-file line, and line up their dogs with the first person in line, so you are all in a straight line.

**Stacking your dog:** The dog is on your left side. First, lean over the top of the dog, take your left hand, and line the left, front leg up with the withers, and make sure it is straight-forward. Do the same with the right, front leg, only use your right hand for the right, front leg. The right hand is ONLY used to position the right, front leg. After you have the front 2 feet parallel, take your left hand, and do the left, back leg. When you do this, move the foot by putting your hand underneath the body of the dog to get to the left, back leg. Do not lean over the top of the dog to move the leg. With most breeds of dog, generally you just need to make the back feet

square to the body, and slightly stretched back. The last foot you move is the right, back foot, and again, you use your left hand to move it, just like the other back foot. Make them parallel as well, but they should have a wider gap between them than the front legs do. If you are beginner, just focus on keeping the dog's feet straight and parallel, and keeping the dog still. The picture to the right is of a stacked dog. Those of you with small dogs will put your dogs on the table to stack them for the individual examination by the judge.



After you stack your dog, if you are not first in line, focus on keeping the dog's feet stacked. Quietly tell your dog that he/she is a good dog. It is okay to talk to your dog in showmanship, but do not be obnoxious or really loud about it. When you are in junior showmanship, do not worry if your dog is not perfect all of the time; just focus on keeping the dog somewhat still.

**Individual examinations of the dog by the judge:** When it is your turn for the judge to examine your dog, make sure the dog is stacked correctly and you have your right hand with the lead bunched in it behind the dog's neck, and the left hand is holding up the tail. When the judge comes towards your dog to examine it, switch your left hand to hold the lead behind the dog's neck, and put your right hand underneath the dog's muzzle (mouth). The judge will either ask you to show the dog's bite, or will open it him/herself. If they want you to do it, they will say, "Show me the bite please." After they pat down the dog, then the judge will have you do the pattern of his/her choice. It will either be the triangle, or the L-pattern. Important: **SOME JUDGES ONLY TELL THE FIRST PERSON IN LINE WHAT THE PATTERN IS.** Most likely in junior showmanship, they will tell each exhibitor, but sometimes they only tell the first person, so you **HAVE** to pay attention to what pattern the first person in line does. When the judge tells you, "Please do a triangle for me (or L-pattern)", you do your courtesy turn first, do the pattern, and come back to the judge and stop to show your dog. Then the judge will say thank you, or go around please, and you will then make a circle until you reach the end of the line. Re-stack your dog.

After everyone is done, the first person will be back to the front of the line. The most important time of the show is when everyone is done with their individual examinations and patterns, and the judge takes the "final look" at everyone and their dogs. This is the time where you want your dog to look good, standing still, and you are not moving unless you have to re-stack your dog, or get him under control. When the judge is done looking at everyone one last time, he/she will say thank you, please go around (in a circle again), and then exit the ring. They will tell you how to do that, and if you are not first in line, you follow the first in line around the ring. That is it!!

### **Tips:**

- Make sure your dog has emptied its bladder and bowels before you go into the ring. If your dog potties in the ring, you are pretty much guaranteed to lose, so it is **REALLY** important to let the dog potty **BEFORE** you go in the ring.
- **ALWAYS** keep your dog between you and the judge. Never be between the judge and the dog. **THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT**, because if you are between the judge and the dog, the judge cannot see the dog.
- If you are nervous, eat a mint or chew gum (but spit the gum out before going into the ring). Dogs can smell nervousness, and it makes them nervous as well. If you eat a mint, they cannot smell the nervousness.
- If your dog is jumpy, brush your dog for a few minutes before going into the ring; this calms the dog down.
- **Remember to smile and look like you are having fun, because, hopefully you are!!!!**